

**OUTDOOR RECREATION
URBAN SELF-HELP PROGRAM
STRATEGIC URBAN RECREATION FUND
LAND & WATER CONSERVATION FUND
Application Step Procedures**

(Step 1.) Municipality requests Urban Self-Help application from the Division of Conservation Services *before purchasing land or before construction begins* (for all other projects). At this time, deadlines for filing applications should be ascertained.

(Step 2a.) Municipality files two copies of the complete application. *No Incomplete Applications Will Be Accepted, No Electronic Filings Will Be Accepted*

The following items must be included with the application:

- (a) Copy of municipal vote accepting the Conservation Commission (M.G.L. c.40 s.8c) and Park Commission (M.G.L.c.45 s.2) and current appointments to said Commissions.
- (b) Plot or survey plan of area adequately defining metes and bounds of project and USGS Locus Map showing Project Site and any adjacent or nearby public or quasi-public land.
- (c) Site Development Plans: services of a professional design firm are strongly recommended.
- (d) Cost Estimates: services of a professional design firm are recommended for renovation and development projects. DCS approved appraisals and closing costs are eligible for state reimbursement and should be included in your total project cost.
- (e) Professional appraisals for acquisition projects. (See USPAP and the Uniform Appraisal Standards for Federal Land Acquisitions.)
- (f) Evidence that a public meeting was held presenting the Project and that a response has been made to any opposition to the Project.
- (g) Copy of municipal vote and deed proving that property is permanently dedicated for park, playground, or recreation purposes. This is further explained in the DCS handout "Dedication to Conservation or Recreation Use and Boundary Map Requirements".
- (h) Evidence of public hearing on proposed project (copy of actual newspaper ad or actual posted announcement). Consider concentrating on local neighborhood participation by posting notices with tenants associations, in local grocery stores or with Community Development Corporations.
- (i) Open space/recreation plan approved by the Division and no more than five years old if not already on file with the Division or evidence that such a plan is underway and will be complete by the application completion deadline.
- (j) Any pertinent attachments required in application.

(Step 2b.) File with the Office for Commonwealth Development (OCD) for your community's Commonwealth Capital Score. Check OCD's web site at <http://www.mass.gov/oed/comcap.html> for more information on the scoring process.

(Step 3.) Field examination is conducted by Division representative.

In emergency cases involving land acquisition in which the land must be acquired prior to approval action, the Director may grant permission to proceed with the Project provided a field examination has been completed and a complete preliminary application has been submitted to the Division. This clearance to proceed with the acquisition in no way obligates the Commonwealth to fund the Project. No permission to proceed will be given by the Division for construction projects prior to Project approval.

(Step 4) Interagency review and priority rating by the Division, Interagency Lands Committee, and the Office for Commonwealth Development. Consultations with the Commission, if necessary. Priority ratings will be assigned to each Project using the Open Project Rating System, which is based on needs identified in the current SCORP and OCD factors.

(Step 5) Preliminary application reviewed and approved with or without special conditions, or rejected by the Secretary.

(Step 6) Waiver request. In some extenuating circumstances a Participant may need to purchase the subject property prior to obtaining a selection decision from DCS. The Division may grant permission to proceed with the acquisition, provided that a site inspection has been completed and a complete Urban Self-Help application with all the necessary attachments listed in Step 2 above (including the appraisal reports) have been submitted to the Division. *This clearance to proceed with the acquisition in no way obligates the Commonwealth to fund the project.* If the project is not selected by DCS for funding, and the municipality has acquired it, it cannot be resubmitted in a subsequent grant round.

(Step 7) Project approval or Rejection. Final application, billing forms, State Standard Contracts, and Project Agreement for approved Projects sent to Participant. The Director may revise any of these documents from time to time. The current forms are available from the Division to any interested person at no charge. Funds are obligated by the Commonwealth upon execution of contract documents for approved Projects. Unsuccessful Applicants will receive an explanation of why the Project was rejected and recommendations, if any, regarding resubmission.

(Step 8a) Municipality votes to appropriate, expend from available funds, or borrow an amount equal to the total project cost stated in the application. A Municipality may vote to borrow funds in anticipation of state reimbursement prior to receiving agreement for reimbursement, but the borrowing cannot actually take place until final state approval has been received. Municipal vote for the total project cost may take place prior to Step 1 in the application process, but the Municipality must ensure proper compliance with the Urban Self-Help application procedures. Approval may be withdrawn if Municipality's vote fails or if Municipality exhibits lack of progress in obtaining this vote or in meeting time schedules established as part of approval conditions.

(Step 8b) Exclusive of borrowing situations, and if the community wishes, reimbursements may be re-appropriated back into the Participant's Conservation Fund or dedicated fund. Said authorization may be voted in the original article or submitted in subsequent Town Meeting or City Council votes; otherwise, reimbursements must be deposited into the General Fund as per Massachusetts General Law. Communities utilizing accounts funded by the Cape Cod Land Bank Act, other local land bank acts, or the Community Preservation Act, should consult with the Department of Revenue, Division of Local Services for guidelines.

(Step 9) Participant files all required permits, final construction plans, and specifications

(Step 10) Purchase takes place or construction starts after approval has been received from Town Meeting or City Council and the Executive Office of Environmental Affairs, Division of Conservation Services.

(Step 11) Billing Forms filed with the Division, along with required documentation. See *Request for Reimbursement and Billing Form Procedures* and *Quarterly Progress Report Requirements* on file with DCS. (Partial payments may be requested.)

(Step 12) All billing forms, Request for Reimbursements, and documents are reviewed for completeness and accuracy. (A final inspection of the project is conducted prior to final payment.)

(Step 13) Director reports to the Secretary and requests approval to make payments.

(Step 14) Invoice prepared and submitted for payment.

(Step 15) Participant receives reimbursement, typically via electronic transfer. **Applicants should review DCS Post Completion requirements regarding fees, user limitations, reversions, and conversions.**